

ARE PRIVATE BRANDS OK?

By HERB GRAFFIS

ANNOUNCEMENT by Macy's, big New York price-cutting store, that it will supply its private-brand merchandise, including sporting goods, to retailers in other cities under an arrangement that does not call for price maintenance, is of considerable interest to the golf field—both pros and manufacturers.

Pros outside the New York trading area have heard New York pros talk for years about Macy's disturbing policy of advertising cut prices on standard-brands of balls. Manufacturers have said that every possible legal means have been employed to keep Macy's in line so pro and other price-maintaining outlets could get a living profit. Figures have been cited to show that Macy's purchases of standard-brand balls have been much lower than the Macy purchases of their own private-brand balls.

Complaints about Macy cut-price policies are much stronger from the drug and toilet article fields than from the golf field. The new distribution arrangement will carry a slug into drug, toilet article, food and many other lines of merchandising, in addition to sporting goods.

Macy's Plans Makes Pros Wonder

Informed and studious pros wonder how the entrance of a Macy private-brand ball on a wide scale of retail distribution will affect pro private-brand activities. Pros are still pretty much in the dark about the Federal Trade Commission action against the PGA ball arrangement. They don't know whether a private-brand deal of their own can ever be worked out legally on a rebate-to-the-pro basis, and since news of the Macy expansion of cut-price private-brands has been broadcast thoughtful pros are debating whether any pro private-brand is desirable.

The two sides of this debate mainly are: For the affirmative—There is some market protection in the exclusive distribution of a private-brand ball by the pros. Such a ball at a standard price can be forced on the market. For the negative—Pro endorsement of the private-brand idea invites and strengthens competition from other private-brand outlets, practically all of which will cut prices sharply and threaten present pro control of the ball market.

From the association viewpoint the pro private-brand income is tied up so closely with the PGA membership that there is an urgent reason for retaining the refund idea, which figures prominently in having increased the organization's roster.

Philosophers in the PGA ranks maintain that the present nervous situation in the ball business will straighten itself out, not primarily because of the working of any "deal" but because of the increased employment of pro retailing sense and energy in making use of the pros' strategic selling location and personal contact possibilities with the eventual buyers.

A REVISED EDITION of the PGA official record book, including events played up to April 15, 1937, has been issued by the organization. The new edition contains biographical material on Guldahl, Ghezzi and Snead, in addition to revisions of some of the other biographies.

The book is a valuable reference item. It would be made still more valuable were complete records of the PGA championships included, and if it carried names and scores of winners of the principal sectional Open tournament winners since the inception of these events.

DANNY WILLIAMS, veteran pro at Shackamaxon, has been going through a thorough examination at John Hopkins hospital, Baltimore, in an effort to determine the cause of his prolonged illness. Shackamaxon's board of governors arranged the Hopkins session for Danny, in recognition of his long and faithful service to the club.

Poke Freeman Dies—That widely syndicated golf comic strip, "In the Rough", lost its creator when on August 21, Howard B. (Poke) Freeman passed away. In addition to his comic strip, Freeman served as sport cartoonist and columnist for the past 25 years on the Newark Evening News.